

Halo: Initiation

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Summary: The events of the Halo: Initiation comic, just with words rather than pictures. T for violence.

1. Chapter 1

HIGHCOM FACILITY BRAVO-6

>SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
JANUARY 2553

The twelve admirals sat at the u-shaped table, waiting patiently for the meeting they'd all been called together for to come to order. The room was flooded with light as the single door before them opened. The gold and black logo of the United Nations Space Command stood out against the blue tint of the floor. They all looked to the lone figure as his chair wheeled into the room, stopping in the space between the logo's raised wings.

"Ladies. Gentlemen. Thank you for having me here today," the commander greeted.

"You made it sound like we didn't have much of a choice, Musa," one of the admirals commented.

"I suppose I didn't, did I?" Musa admitted. He was far from a handsome man, his nose, chin, lips, and ears all seeming too big for his face. But he spoke with authority and confidence.

"Soâ€|?" another admiral urged, trying to get things moving.

Musa decided that he'd kept them waiting long enough and would get to the point. "I've come to talk about the Spartans."

"I knew this was a waste of time." One of the Admirals stood up, prepared to storm out of the room.

"Sit down, Admiral." Musa didn't have to shout the words; they echoed

in the room, but above all they held a weight that made the admiral stop in his tracks. "And you will listen to what I have to say. You owe me that much at least." There was a moment of hesitation before the admiral sat down and Musa continued.

"The original Spartans, Leonidas and his boys I'm talking about here. They were taken from their families as children, and trained as warriors. It's been two thousand years since Thermopylae, and we're still talking about them, so maybe the Spartans did something right." Musa could still see the holographic figures of the armored soldiers holding back waves of enemies in the small mountain pass. He focused again on his choice of words, knowing that this meeting required just as much strategy as an actual battle. "Doctor Catherine Halsey thought so." He could feel the uneasiness in the room growing. "She kidnapped children from their beds, stole them from their families, and enlisted them in a life of servitude to the UNSC." Just as he had expected, the admirals were clearly uncomfortable now.

Now that he had their full attention, this was the time to bring down the hammer and really use the guilt that was attached to the Spartan-II program against them. "But you know that part," Musa continued with a casual, but still serious tone. He also allowed a small amount of anger to tint his words. "Hell, it was people like you, sitting in a room like this, that gave Catherine the power to assault the bodies and minds of innocent children." His voice rose a bit in volume. "Who gave her the permission she needed to sentence me to a life of pain in this chair." His hand rested on his legs but he couldn't really feel them. He hadn't been able to since the augmentations stripped him of his ability to walk. "Do you know how many children Catherine Halsey killed in her quest?" Musa let his head drop and his eyes close. "I do. I know all of their names." He'd grown up with them, and although he had survived, too many hadn't even been as lucky as him. "Their faces haunt my dreams in ways I can only hope they still haunt hers." His voice was a bit quieter as he reflected for a moment on how often he saw all the members of his fallen family in his dreams. He collected himself and put more force behind his words. "As much as I may hate that woman, and rail against her crimesâ€¦ It is my brothers and sisters who saved humanity. We would not be here were it not for Spartans. But now with the Master Chief lost and the others all missing in actionâ€¦" Musa couldn't bring himself to admit that the rest of the Spartan-IIs were dead; he had to believe that they were still alive, somewhere. "Our guardians are gone," he finished.

Musa then straightened up in his chair, pulling it all together with his final statements. "The Covenant have been kicked into submission, but already we hear there are cultist leaders who are gathering followers. When those sects rise up, we must be prepared to face them. And we know already that things are not well in our colonies. It is only a matter of time until the insurrection rears its head once more."

"Musaâ€¦ you have my sympathyâ€¦" one of the admirals began.

"No one needs your sympathy, Admiral!" Musa barked.

"Then what?" the admiral asked.

"What we need, are Spartans." Musa smiled slightly as he prepared to strike the final blow. "So I made some."

2. Chapter 2

Initiation Part 2

OCTOBER 2552

Sirens echoed through the ship, the call for all crewmen to get to their stations and prepare to fight. Boots beat against the metal floor of the hallways as the soldiers ran to gear up. The words 'prepare to drop' lit up the walls, guiding the marines to their lockers. Calls of "Helljumper, Helljumper, where you been?" was met by a response of "Feet first into Hell then back again!" The troopers raced through the hallways, knowing every second mattered.

Running ahead of the male soldiers was a lone female marine. She pulled her locker open and reached in, collecting her gear and starting to suit up. The way that she saw it, life was fairly simple. If you were at a dinner party and were asked what you do, you had a choice. You could say: "Oh, I file paperwork for a living." She secured the last of her armor into place and moved toward the line of drop pods. She was welcomed by the shout of a teammate, "When I die please bury me deep!" which was finished off by another teammate with "place my MA5 down by my feet!"

She moved into her pod and settled into place. The other way you could reply was: "I'm an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper. I fall out of the sky in a ball of fire, and then kill every sonuvabitch from Hell to breakfast." The female marine secured herself and watched the light. She could feel the adrenaline running through her veins, preparing her for the fight ahead. She couldn't help the smile that spread across her face at the sensation. Because if she was asked what she did, she certainly knew her answer. The light turned to green, and her world started to fall.

The pair of Warthogs bounced over the ground, speeding away from the Covenant forces as their gunners laid down fire behind them. The Admiral was huddled in his seat, clutching the AI container tight to his chest, terrified. The driver of the Warthog on the other hand was trying to remain fully focused on his driving. Still the officer beside him was getting to be a distraction. "Just hang tight, Admiral Kovalic," the driver tried to soothe, hoping the man would calm down. "Your ride off-world's three klicks south of the base. We'll be there in no time."

The words seemed to bring no calm to Admiral Kovalic. His eyes rose to the sky and the Covenant ships above, spotting lines of fire as several objects dropped down from out of orbit. "What the Hell is that in the sky?"

The driver looked up and the fire suddenly slowed, the outline of metal pods becoming visible. "Sir," the marine said with an edge of relief. "That's the cavalry."

There a ray of hope brought by the sight of the pods, but it vanished as the roar of a Brute pulled the men's attention to the road ahead of them. They turned around in time to see a Brute Chieftain slam its gravity hammer down and send the second Warthog flipping through the

air. Their jeep passed the foe and the gunner in their turret turned to fire on the enemy. The machine gun rounds just pinged off the ape-like alien's armor and it roared in rage. With surprising precision the Brute hurled its hammer, slamming it directly into the gunner and sending him flying from the jeep. The force sent the Warthog skidding and its tires lifted from the ground. They rolled, the driver being thrown from the jeep to his death, and the vehicle finally coming to a stop on its side.

Admiral Kovalic climbed out of the passenger's side onto the dirt. "Oh godâ€¦Oh godâ€¦" He tucked the AI container under his arm and tried to move around to the front of the vehicle. "Oh shitâ€¦Oh shitâ€¦" The Admiral looked back and could see the Brute standing tall not far away. The alien stopped, looking to his right slightly.

The drop pod slammed into the ground, just missing the Brute by inches. The ground cracked under the Chieftain and he was sent flying. The Brute returned to his feet, grabbing his hammer and swinging around to face the new foe as the door of the pod was ejected.

Lance Corporal Sarah Palmer stepped out of the drop pod, assault rifle blazing. "Hey there," she greeted casually as she fired on the Brute Chieftain. Behind her visor she was grinning, because there was one thing that was absolutely certain: Sarah Palmer was an ODS, and she loved her job. After twelve tours of duty, and having served on eight major planets, she'd fought every kind of Covenant and she would face down any one of them without a moment of hesitation.

The assault rifle fire kept the Brute back, but Sarah knew that it wouldn't be enough to take the enemy down. She decided that she'd take a more direct approach. She stopped firing and ran forward, racing toward the Brute head on. It swung its hammer and Sarah jumped, tucking her legs up so the weapon passed under her. When she landed it left her facing the Brute's side and one of the weakest points in its armor. Sarah jammed the muzzle of her rifle into the joint between the plates and under layer, and unloaded into the alien. She emptied the clip and the Brute fell to the ground, dead.

"All right, there's that then," Sarah said, moving on to the next task at hand. She clicked her radio and made contact with her team leader. "Lance Corporal Palmer to Bossman. I'm on the ground awaitingâ€¦"

Sarah stopped as she heard a voice not that far away pleading. "No! Please! I have a familyâ€¦" Sarah rolled her eyes, amazed that anyone thought the Covenant cared if they had a family. The only thing the Covenant cared about was killing humans.

"Bossman here, Palmer. I see youâ€¦" Bossman replied over the radio. He didn't finish as Sarah cut him off.

"A moment, Bossman. Kinda busy all of a sudden." Sarah moved quickly toward the man, spotting the stripes on his uniform and the number of Covenant bearing down on him. "Admiral," Sarah said, getting the man's attention. She pushed him back behind the Warthog, and ducked behind it herself as the Covenant opened fire. Sarah set her back against the bumper of the jeep and readied her gun. "What's brass

doing running around out here? We heard you'd been evac'd." The fact that the Admiral wasn't where he should've been might mean that something had gone wrong and they hadn't been told. Wouldn't be the first time that they hadn't gotten up-to-date info, but the sooner they got updates the sooner they could adapt.

"I have the base AI," The admiral answered, clutching the case to his chest. "It couldn't be allowed to be destroyed or to fall intoâ€"|"

Sarah scowled, knowing she should have expected this sort of decision that the eggheads made. They always thought that their AIs were worth getting good soldiers killed, and were so afraid of destroying them. Still, she had a clear task now. She had to get the Admiral and the AI off the planet, and fast.

"Oh no! Look!"

The Admiral's words pulled Sarah from her thoughts and she turned to see the Chieftain she'd thought she just killed on its feet again, roaring in anger. She could see the fury in the Brute's eyes.

"Seriously?" Sarah said, slightly annoyed. She opened fire with her assault rifle and the Brute backed only a little bit. "Come on! Die already!" She hated how stubborn Brutes were. They just didn't want to give up living very easily. Sarah stopped, deciding that they didn't have many options and she was going to just go with her first thought. "Rock and a hard place confirmed," she said to herself as she pulled out a grenade and armed it. "Admiral, get ready to run toward the Brute."

"Toward it?" The Admiral sounded absolutely terrified, but Sarah was in no mood to put up with cowardice.

"Yes, toward it," Sarah confirmed, tossing the grenade behind them and toward the Warthog. "Away from the grenade." Sarah grabbed the Admiral's arm and pulled him toward the Chieftain. "Now! Go!"

"You're insane!" The Admiral complained, but he followed behind Sarah as she moved toward the Brute.

"Trust me. It helps at a time like this." Sarah didn't really think she was crazy, rather preferring the term fearless. The grenade went off, launching the Warthog into the air. It flipped a couple times and slammed into the ground behind them, wheels down. "Back to the Hog, Admiral." The Brute bared its teeth and growled, starting to move forward. Palmer pushed the Admiral toward the back to take the gun. "Get up there and keep you headâ€"|" Sarah's was cut off and lost in a cry of sudden pain as two needler rounds struck her; one impacting her hip and the other piercing her chest armor, scarily close to her heart. She cursed whatever shot her, finding it unfair that she'd be hit by someone she wasn't even fighting.

Still, Sarah had a job to do, so she pushed past her pain and climbed into the Warthog. Her father used to always tell her that pain was all in her head. Sarah hit the reverse as the Brute raised its hammer, managing to avoid it just in time before it slammed down where the vehicle had been only moments before. The Brute bellowed and Sarah tightened her grip on the wheel. She'd told her father she thought he was wrong about pain. Her father had also told her that

revenge never feels as good as you think it will. She loved her father and he'd taught her a lot - but she thought he was wrong about that as well. Sarah gunned the jeep and slammed into the Brute, finally finishing it off. She proceeded to run over the nearby Grunts as well, as she was sure it was one of them that had shot her, just for good measure.

"Palmer to Bossman," Sarah said as she radioed in to her team leader. "I found Admiral Kovalic out hereâ€"

Sarah was cut off as Bossman interrupted. "Kovalic's alive?" Sarah hadn't known he was thought to be dead. "There's a ride waiting for him just south of you. Sending the coordinates now."

"Thanks Bossman." Sarah cut off her radio and turned the jeep to head toward the coordinates that appeared on her HUD. "Admiral, you in one piece back there?"

"I think soâ€|" the Admiral replied hesitantly.

Sarah looked down to the needles that were still sticking out of her armor, glad that at least there wasn't one more; otherwise she might not still be moving. "That makes one of us at least," she muttered.

3. Chapter 3

Initiation Part 3

LOCKHEART MEDICAL STATION
>JANUARY 2553<p>

Sarah Palmer lay in her bed, her eyes closed as she listened to the sounds around her. There was the quiet chatter of doctors and nurses, but she couldn't make out exactly what they were saying. She could hear the footsteps of other patients, staff, and guests, but she knew that none of them had any interest in her. She frowned as she identified a sound that was out of the ordinary. Most people in the medical facility either didn't wear shoes or wore ones with soft soles. The soldiers that visited wore heavy boots, but she could hear the unusual sound of dress shoes. She wouldn't have recognized the sound if she hadn't spent the last three months in medical station, so it had become a sound that stood out.

"Corporal Palmer, do you have a moment to talk?" Sarah didn't recognize the voice as it spoke, but she decided that she couldn't ignore it. She opened her eyes and looked over to see a man standing in the doorway. He was bald, had a tattoo on the side of his head, and was wearing a suit that made her wonder if he was a trained assassin. No, if he was an assassin he wouldn't have announced himself.

Sarah turned to look at him, deciding she should see what he had to say. "Sure, I'm not going anywhere right now." This all felt too formal, and her ODST side started to kick in - trying to ease the tension with humor like she would in combat.

"First of all, congratulations on your promotion," the man started. Sarah thanked him, but she still didn't know why he was there. He

walked into the room and moved to her bedside. She watched him, trying to see if there was any hint as to what his goals were. "You did good work, saving the Admiral's life." The words seemed genuine and so did his smile. "And the AI he was getting off worldâ€¦" The man stopped and looked away, frowning. "Well, if it wasn't so classified, I'd tell you how important it was to rescue." Sarah could only laugh. She had never expected to find out if what she'd done mattered. It was just her job. The man sat down and seemed to make himself comfortable. "What you did, a lot of soldiers couldn't."

"I only did what needed doing. What I was trained to do." Sarah hated being praised for her job. She liked what she did, she felt like she was making a difference, but she wasn't doing anything different than any of her other fellow ODST. She was just lucky enough to have survived her most recent mission, when others weren't.

"You're recovering okay?" the man asked causally.

"I'm guessing you already know the answer to that," Sarah said, frowning. She knew he already knew answer, so she didn't appreciate it being used as idle chit chat to get her guard down.

"Doctors said you follow their orders, you take their meds, and you do their physical rehabilitationâ€¦" The man watched her closely as he spoke, clearly trying to gauge her response. "But you don't seem to respect them very much."

Suddenly it made sense to Sarah. The suit, the questions, the trying to put her at ease. "Ahhhâ€¦you're hospital admin. You've come to chew me out for giving the docs a hard time." She had sort of expected that. The doctors were two thin-skinned for her liking.

"No," the man corrected, surprising Sarah. If that wasn't why he was here, then she had no idea as to what his purpose was in asking those questions. "I'm just curious - why the sudden lack of respect for others? Your record shows no history of that kind of behavior with your fellow marines or ODST." Sarah wondered who this man was that he seemed to have so much access to her service history.

Sarah sighed and supposed there was no harm in answering, hospital admin or not. "Soldiers don't act like they're smarter than me just because it took them eight years longer to get out of school." Sarah hated the way that the doctors and a lot of scientists she'd had to have contact with treated her like she was a knuckle dragging cavewoman because she was an ODST. She'd joined the ODST right after she graduated from high school to do her part for the war. She didn't hide away for a few more years in school because she was afraid of dying at the hand of aliens.

"Okay, I get it now," the man said, nodding his head slightly.

"You do?" Sarah was surprised by that. Most people dressed like him didn't understand soldiers like her.

"Better than you might imagine, actually." For some reason Sarah didn't doubt that he did understand. Something about his tone somehow spoke of a soldier who knew what it was like to go head to head with the Covenant, something that seemed to clash with his appearance.

"Mister...?" Sarah waited for him to fill in the blank.

"Jun," he answered simply.

"Mister Jun..." she waited for a last name.

"No. Just Jun," he clarified.

"Oh, one name. Very enigmatic," Sarah commented sarcastically. Having only one name sounded like something a secret agent in a crappy movie would do, so she wondered if he really only had one name or if he was just trying to be mysterious.

"Not really," Jun said bluntly.

Sarah was starting to get annoyed by all of this. Jun was giving her nothing and every clue about him seemed to be contradicted by his own words right away. "I've been polite so far," she said, deciding to get to business and find out what she wanted to know. "So what do you want with me?"

"Are you familiar with the Spartans?" Jun asked, though the question stuck Sarah as odd. You would have had to be deaf, blind, and stupid to not know of the Spartans.

"Big robotic-looking guys. They stomp around the battlefield kicking everyone's ass and making the rest of us feel inadequate." Like all ODS, Sarah didn't like the Spartans very much. It was a resentment that was born from fighting for years and always being in the shadow of the ONI's walking tanks. How many of her fellow ODS had died without complaint in the battlefield? But they were often forgotten and the only thing remembered was the Spartans. Sarah could remember when she was young and how all the new marines wanted to be ODS, and how she'd been proud to be accepted into the ODS training program. These days though people didn't ask how to become ODS, they just wanted to know how to become Spartans.

"Well, given the actions that landed you here and your service record as a whole..." Sarah didn't know what Jun was trying to get at. She was here because of a bit of bad luck - that was it. "How would you like to be one? A Spartan." Jun's eyes were watching her like a hawk's would watch a rabbit, looking to see how it would react.

At first the question didn't make sense to Sarah. She didn't understand what he was offering, or how he could be offering it. She'd heard plenty of soldiers ask how to become Spartans, but she'd never heard of anyone ever being offered the chance to actually become one. As far as she knew, no new Spartans had been added since the first ones had been put into the field. Then again, how could you tell with them all looking the same? There was certainly no way she was being offered such a chance for getting herself injured. She was certain she'd heard Jun wrong.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

End
file.